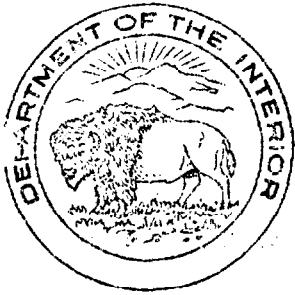


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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

For Release TO THE PM's
OF TUESDAY, AUGUST 1, 1944.W

The Pacific pilchard fishery enters its 1944-45 season today in northern California with demands for its products so heavy that a catch of more than a billion pounds will be needed to meet military, lend-lease, and civilian requirements, according to the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries.

The pilchard fishery, which furnishes nearly a fourth of the total yield of aquatic products in the United States and Alaska, provides the raw materials for a canned pack of three to four million cases of pilchards or California sardines, and of more than a million gallons of oil and 12 to 15 thousand tons of meal for animal feeds.

Because of unfavorable conditions during several recent spawning seasons, pilchards are expected to be somewhat less abundant this year and the industry will find it necessary to operate with maximum efficiency to take full advantage of available supplies, officials of the Coordinator's Office said. While individual boats will probably make catches of normal size, schools of fish may be scattered and without careful organization of operations the total catch may decline.

The Coordinator's Office has completed arrangements with the Navy for two different types of experiments designed to aid fishermen in locating schools of pilchards, which swim at or near the surface and are usually caught at night, when they can be seen by phosphorescence.

One of the tests, being made for the first time this year, is designed to show whether the Navy's extremely sensitive sonic depth-finding apparatus can be adapted to locating schools of pilchards swimming too deep to be sighted at the surface. These tests, which are scheduled to begin immediately, will be concentrated in the area between San Francisco and Monterey, where some of the principal pilchard fishing grounds are located.

Dr. L. A. Walford, a biologist of the Fish and Wildlife Service who is thoroughly familiar with the pilchard fishery, will accompany a naval vessel on its routine cruises through the fishing area. If it is found feasible to locate and identify schools of pilchard with the echo sounding instruments, Naval patrol vessels along the coast will be instructed to notify the fishing fleet through the Coordinator's Office of the location of schools located.

Apparatus now in use by the Navy, even if it proves adaptable to locating fish, will not be available for commercial use until after the war. However, a somewhat similar although much less sensitive device is part of the equipment of many

fishing boats and has been used with some success in detecting schools of herring in British Columbia, southeastern Alaska, and New England.

Experiments begun last season in the use of Navy blimps to spot schools of pilchards from the air will also be continued. Tests made during January and February indicated that observers with previous experience as mast men on pilchard boats could distinguish schools of pilchards from other fish such as tuna. The position of the fish was then radioed to shore and the fishing crews were notified so that they might operate that night in areas where the fish were concentrated. While useful, the method has several limitations: schools cannot be sighted in rough weather which disturbs the surface, visibility is at its best only around the middle of the day, and the schools do not always appear near enough to the surface during the day to be sighted.

The boat situation in the pilchard fishery is definitely better than for several seasons, officials of the Coordinator's Office said. Although the fishery has been operating for several years with a fleet greatly depleted by the requisitioning of boats by the Navy, it is again approaching its normal size due to the return of many of the vessels and to new construction.

A netting shortage which was threatened earlier in the year is believed to have been averted by action taken by the War Production Board at the recommendation of the Fishery Coordinator. Netting manufacturers were authorized to concentrate on the manufacture of netting for the pilchard fishery during June and it is believed that an adequate supply is now in the hands of the fishermen.

For the second consecutive year, the pilchard fishery is operating under a production program administered by the Coordinator of Fisheries in the interest of obtaining maximum production and insuring a proper division of the catch among canned fish, meal, and oil.

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